

Fall 1985

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Valparaiso University

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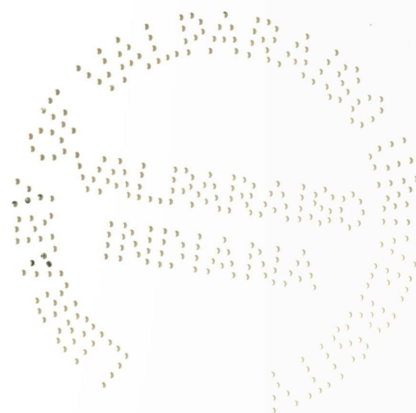
30  
Fall

# The Lighter

FALL 1985

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# The Lighter, Volume 30, Fall 1985

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The Lighter encourages any criticism concerning the content or appearance  
of the magazine. Please address all comments to the editors.

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It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.

—Wallace Stevens

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## On the Shelf in the Back of the Pantry

You're the only one I've ever met  
who thought years were meant to be  
stored in jars.

There was the one we opened the night  
we danced till we dropped  
though there was no music and we  
ate whipped cream in bowls with three  
ragged strangers in the dance hall.

There was the one you unleashed by mistake  
and a hurricane swept through the house,  
its blind eye staring beyond the window,  
beyond the crust holding the sky in place.  
We were crying upside down, so  
the tears rolled into our eyes, and  
we couldn't see the children and all  
the chains in our careful fence  
pulled apart. It took a long time to squeeze  
that year back in.

There was the lovely little glass year  
that you dared not breathe on.

There was the year we planted  
too early and it died from frost.

There were even years pushed way  
in the back, that only you knew about,  
like that year you spent with a key in your  
temple that locked with a snap.

Which shall we open this time?  
The cold of the new year is coming on  
and I'm hungry for a small place to rest.

Terri Muth

## Versions of the Rune Stone

1.

The secrets I keep secret from myself  
keep shouldering up through their strata of darkness,  
brawny, unmentionable,  
stones in a Texas field in spring.

2.

I think this stone is named  
the hermit stone;  
that other, the stone of sheer  
serenity, the seeing-through  
stone.  
Already they contain long stories.

3.

A drift of linden  
in the summer rain,  
a drift of linden-scent  
above the summer's green.

4.

As I am waking this morning  
rhythms of the lines of poems,  
solid and open,  
rise like scaffolding beneath me.  
Dancing them lightly,  
uplifted, just half in the half-light,  
I am slipping what cripples:  
fear of these heights.

5.

Curious, that I should gather in  
these stones. And, with that harvest,  
hear, through darkness  
these distant words,  
long-drawn and hard-drawn  
from the heart's clearest well.

Kathleen Mullen



## A Window on the Park

Lighted in this western window,  
alone, I dangle  
one conspicuous leg  
over the ledge.  
Young couples kiss  
and part below, or meet  
amid late roses.  
Inside I find pressed blossoms  
black with age.

Impatient bells foreshadow the escape  
of children, and the park  
becomes a kaleidoscope  
of confusion.  
With unseen signals  
mothers find their own,  
win peanut-butter-and-jelly  
hugs and kisses.  
One gremlin grins up  
at the gargoyle  
in my window.

Without children I watch the sun  
set. Cold bones barely feel  
its warmth. Between the sun  
and me the low-ceilinged clouds  
suspend. Rain falls rustling  
amid red and yellow leaves.  
I am an old woman, good  
for propping windows open.

Christine Grusak

a squirrel gaily jumping o'er the grass  
leaps on a mine  
and explodes

"sometimes i belive then"

S.M. Buss



Uptown—Chicago 9/85

Amy Richter





Bill Lemmons



## Wall of Words

You  
Sit in front of me  
Talking.

Talking,  
Talking,  
And talking

You  
Do not think that i  
Am talking (do you?)  
but i am.

While your words  
Bombard      Jets      From  
My      Of      A  
Ears      Cold      Shower  
Like      Water      Massage

While your moving lips  
Become one blurry image in front of my tired eyes

i      am      crying

i      am      screaming

i      am      huddling up

inside  
but

You  
Will never know what i am saying  
Because  
You're  
Talking

S.M. Buss

## As I Always Do

Keith Moriarty slides his gym shirt  
over his linebacker shoulders as I shiver  
by him, beads of water clinging  
to my pale body.  
“Bwaad, when you gonna get some pubic hair?”  
I snatch my towel from a locker and turn away  
as I always do,  
counting the cracks in the gray tile floor as I walk  
to the john—this room that holds  
the sweet stench of a half century  
of sweaty boys’ piss. I see  
my face in the mirror, and I can’t imagine  
my father looking like this  
when he was sixteen.  
I notice, in the last stall,  
an empty pant leg draped  
over the edge of the toilet like a blue tongue.  
My jeans, underwear, and t-shirt soak in yellow water.

Clutching the towel  
my breaths shorten, and I run  
back into the locker room, wet feet slapping  
toward him. His meaty back and hairy shoulders taunt  
me as he towel-snaps the ass of a football buddy.  
He just begins to turn  
as I fling my bony frame into him. He crashes  
into a locker, the metal mesh grating  
his face. Somehow, I am still standing  
when he spins around. The blood runs  
in so many tributaries that meet  
at his dimpled chin and drip  
onto his chest. His fists fall  
to his side for a moment when he sees  
it is me. I don’t even try  
to move out of the way of that paw  
that comes at me—so slowly, I swear  
I can read his class ring.

Bill Rohde





“Water”

Krista Lewis



## Mid-August

The crab apples are falling;  
it must be August.

It must be a time for all  
small things to let loose  
and spread themselves,  
while larger concerns pull together,  
looming: the possibility of love,  
the low evening light  
lost in wild leaves that  
lose themselves  
to color,  
the lace on a dress turning to wool,  
wood, then all-consuming fire,  
the world we must slow  
to capture  
a thick, short moment for ourselves.

Terri Muth

## The Bargain

(to a Prague artist)

What I bought of you on April last  
as khaki men closed in from  
either end of Karlov Most\*  
a braver world away  
hangs finished now.

Your eyes rebellious still  
fill now the sepia void,  
complete Hradcany's\*\* proud mast,  
and sign where should have been  
the interloper's star  
your name to this  
our spirits' framed transaction.

Lois Reiner

\*Karlov Most, translated "Charles Bridge,"  
spans the Moldau river in Prague,  
Czechoslovakia.

\*\*Hradcany is the castle complex  
overlooking the city.





Kathrin Eimer



When loneliness  
grips my heart  
and sucks its strength,  
leaving me shriveled  
in the sand,  
among the broken shells  
and tattered sea weed,  
I recall  
my buoyant strength,  
when that last  
salty tear crackled  
in the heat,  
baring me to the  
crashing, quenching,  
overwhelming wave.

Kathrin Eimer

## Mid-August

The crab apples are falling.  
It must be August.  
It must be a time for all  
small things to let loose  
and spend themselves,  
while larger concerns pull together,  
waiting: the possibility of love,  
the low evening light  
that in mid-June that  
last themselves  
to come  
the day at a slow turning to night,  
and then all-consuming day,  
the world we must show  
the light.



Matthew Voortman



## What Do You Want?

Man, you tried;  
Yeah you did  
to put me between borders,  
force me to fit where  
I didn't want to.  
You said, "Let's not talk to her, make  
her beg to be a part of us,"  
and me—instead of enjoying my own brain—  
tried to jump into yours.  
If I only could have known  
what a pointless move that was:  
all I found was lifeless mush.  
My *dog* is more interesting.  
Yeah, but I pretended and thought  
"This is great,"  
so I tried to be the  
same, think the same,  
but I never did.  
If I told you that  
though, you just laughed and said,  
"yeah right" with lots of  
sarcasm.  
Yeah, well I finally realized  
that it didn't matter if  
your plaids matched or  
if your big party was going to be cancelled.  
I didn't give a fuck about you and your  
mapped-out life.  
I never did like things in "neat packages."  
You say "fuck" or "shit" and  
the word explodes like a mistake—  
so what?  
it's just a word:  
Nothingness,  
like the rest of you.

Samantha Arnold

## Till Come the Rains

They say the desert grows larger every year  
as a few more stones crumble and the grasslands flee  
from the advancing sands. The crops again are poor.  
The dunes have crept closer till now they are so near  
they hide the horizon. Some remember the tree  
that brought rain to the land before the white man tore

out its roots. The whispers say the white men stole our  
gods. Our souls are as dry as the advancing sands.  
For many days now the prayer for rain has been sung  
but the song rings empty as our souls. The power  
is gone from us and from the soil, leaving the lands  
dry and thirsting. We will sing till the rains have come.

The roots that held the soil are gone and the wind blows  
it away. The tribe has scattered before the wind.  
The old have starved and the young no longer believe.  
The grain has died in the fields and now no one sows  
the seeds. The gods punish us, but how have we sinned?  
We will wait here beneath the sun and will not leave

till come the rains. Here we will lie down our thirsting  
bones and join our barren souls to this barren soil.  
This land was fertile once and our roots drank deeply  
from the waters. Now the dust covers our drying  
skin. We have sown our tears and spent our lives in toil.  
When shall we bear the sheaves rejoicing? How softly

the sands have crept upon us and covered our souls.  
With empty promises the white man stole our fields.  
It is time to plant again, but what shall we sow?  
Our words shall be the seeds making man and soil whole.  
Plant us where the rain tree grew and hope the land yields  
new fruit. Pray for rain that the seeds we plant might grow.

Paul Fackler





The Way Things Were

Rikard D. Eischen



## Bowling With God

The preparations begin: we exchange our tennis shoes for  
ugly slippery rentals with the size written in big numbers in back—  
8½'s for me, 10's for him.

We select our balls.

We select our beer—Mich Light, of course.

He picks up the tab—Nice Guy.

During the game we take turns keeping score.

In the third frame he gets two gutter balls and I tease him all night.

We manage to gab our way like old ladies through three games;

we have a coupon—bowl two games get another free.

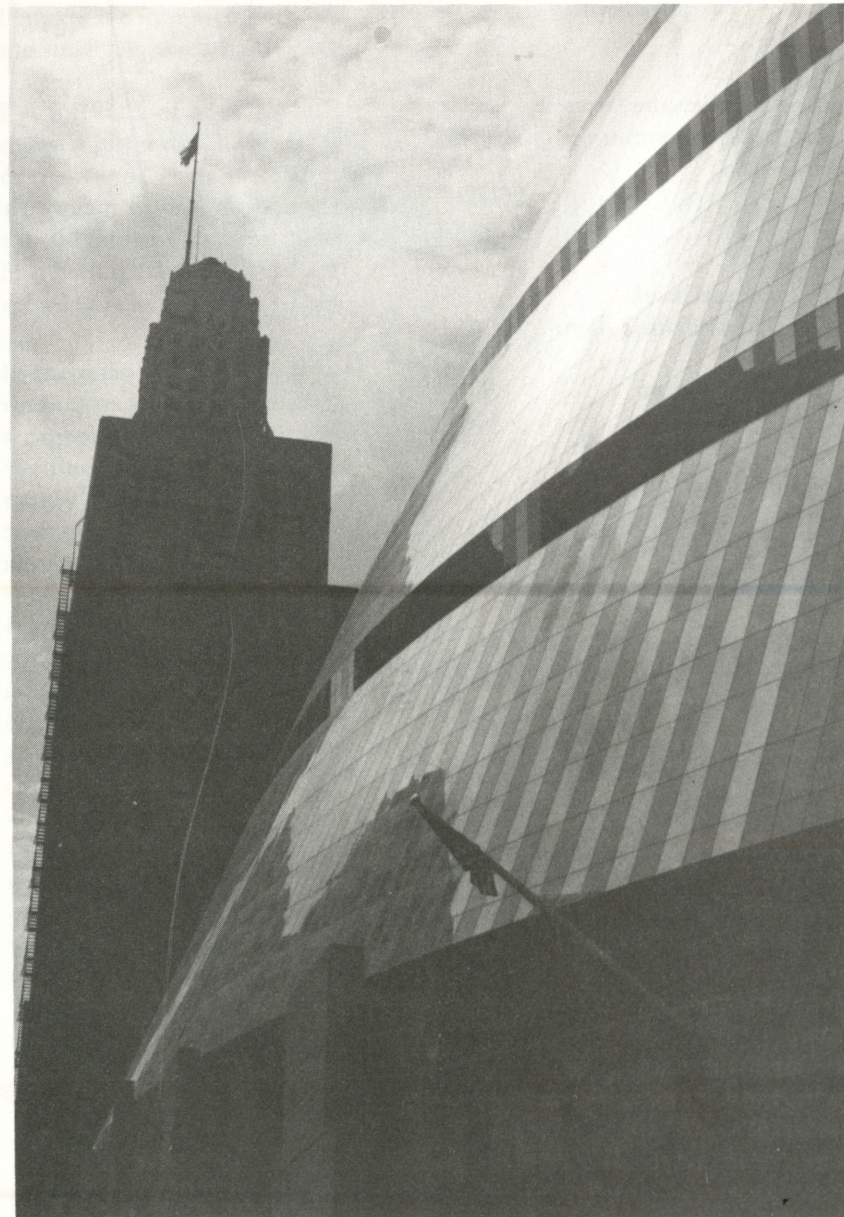
Our conversation is typically eclectic—favorite TV shows and M&M colors to  
current events in the Middle East (he has relatives in Israel) to  
the ideal way to spend the Fourth of July.

And of course we have a blast together (we always do)—  
he's such a kick.

Before we leave, I convince him to sign us up for the mixed couples league  
on Thursdays.

Mary M. Maronde





## Our Canvas World

Our canvas world  
is more like blue nylon—  
tattered,  
no artist's *tabula rasa*  
and definitely not  
for show

but sharing.  
Each to other  
two build one  
mudspattered, leaky  
home from home.

Laura Blair

Barb Gade



## The Smell

Oh for the security of my womb:  
a place that's warm  
and makes me envision  
slow  
deliberate  
sex;  
crawling between the layers  
of cotton/down comfort  
newly-shaven  
legs  
slide  
effortlessly  
across soft pink hands  
that will later smother them  
nevertheless;  
the enveloping scent  
of Ben Gay and men  
like my uncle george  
forcing my head down  
down into the  
complete  
irresistible  
heaven  
that will make me forget  
i am a product  
of my desires i am a survivor  
of my fears  
and i  
yes i  
am  
making  
someone  
happy.



# Cutting Loose

(Laverne "Mickey" Muth,  
June 13, 1916-September 14, 1985)

Fall is turning jagged  
all the curves of summer,  
like the nip of a small dog  
waking one from sleep.  
But in this faltering light,  
Grandma,  
it wakes you into death.  
It wakes me into seeing  
the smallness of all I am.

I've lost track of numbers—  
today is just a day in the middle  
of the world, where children laugh,  
a pregnant woman walks in the shade,  
the old farmer cuts away falling limbs.  
Sun backlights a boarded barn,  
caressing it into a hungry sleep.

In the cellar  
we find six jars of mayonnaise,  
a cupboard full of cling peaches.  
We find \$200 inside a lamp,  
money shoved in a hatband.  
Saving,  
always saving,  
so you would never again be  
the only one with work,  
with brothers, sisters, parents  
asking for potato soup, potato dumplings,  
fried potatoes, money for shoes.  
So next time there'd be  
cream and toast, wool coats,  
and high black boots.  
But now we must bring  
it all out of hiding—  
broken beads,  
watches without hands,  
spools of thread wound with every color.  
We put things in boxes  
to take outside and burn.

You nursed your two sisters through the slow  
opening death made.  
Where others pulled back as if  
death were a spreading circle,  
I watched you bathe their hands,  
their hair,  
though your joints ached too,  
with the fear that you would  
shrink the same way.

What I remember won't be enough in the years to come.  
Still, I can't help but recall us sleeping  
in t-shirts in North Carolina after  
someone had stolen all our clothes.  
We could only look at each other  
and laugh. It was all we had.  
Still, I must remember, once,  
that you walked from Mercy Hospital,  
dazed, in a red robe. We found  
you downtown, in a restaurant,  
asking everyone where home was,  
as if you didn't know.  
Still, I must remember you,  
much younger, refereeing basketball,  
blowing your whistle blue,  
screaming "Foul, foul!"

I've been greedy.  
Rubbing the gold you've given me smooth,  
wanting more;  
wanting always to remember  
what remains of your touch.  
Going through all you've worn,  
stroking the threads,  
sniffing them for some lasting  
scent of you, I try  
each thing on as if  
raising up again  
the loose garment of your life  
onto my own small body.

I'll never change the world.  
Yet I am the only woman  
left to carry on, the oldest,  
the one who's always had  
so much to hide.  
Here I am on the front porch,  
with your small dog,  
watching an evening storm ripple in,  
white as your old headscarf.  
It drops down  
the hill, past Moser's, blowing  
harder and faster,  
thunder splitting the sky,  
then darkly rolls away, silent.  
Although there is no one here to hold,  
although I'm questioning what's real,  
there is time  
to wonder at the streaks  
of color that remain,  
to change my life,  
to gather the past and go inside.

Terri Muth



## North Beach 1985 to Mark

Running my hands through my twisted rat's ass hair. A sunny day and no sweaters or black berets — just tourists and shifty-eyed Chinese. Are we the Day-Glo Beat generation Mark? or are we just Reagan *jungen* grasping at something that doesn't exist? I am stared down by a crazy woman — Woman, what did you see? Do you remember an ashtray full of cigarette butts and jazz and all-night talk sessions that ended with the Golden Gate Bridge? The body is the temple of the soul, the soul is the center of the being, the being is the axis of the universe, the universe revolves around us until we are scattered by four opposing forces and we can see ourselves. And the sun is shining on a Columbus Street bus (30 Stockton). And it is full of temples squashed so carelessly. And my feet hurt from trying to walk into the past but ending up in front of a nudie show that I can't get into. Italian in the bright sun and the City is cloudless and beautiful and it has inspired so many and changed so much and ebbed and flowed and grown and died, and my body is the center of the universe and we are not the Day-Glo Beat Generation but something more...

Brian McGovern





Deb Griswold



## The Neighbor

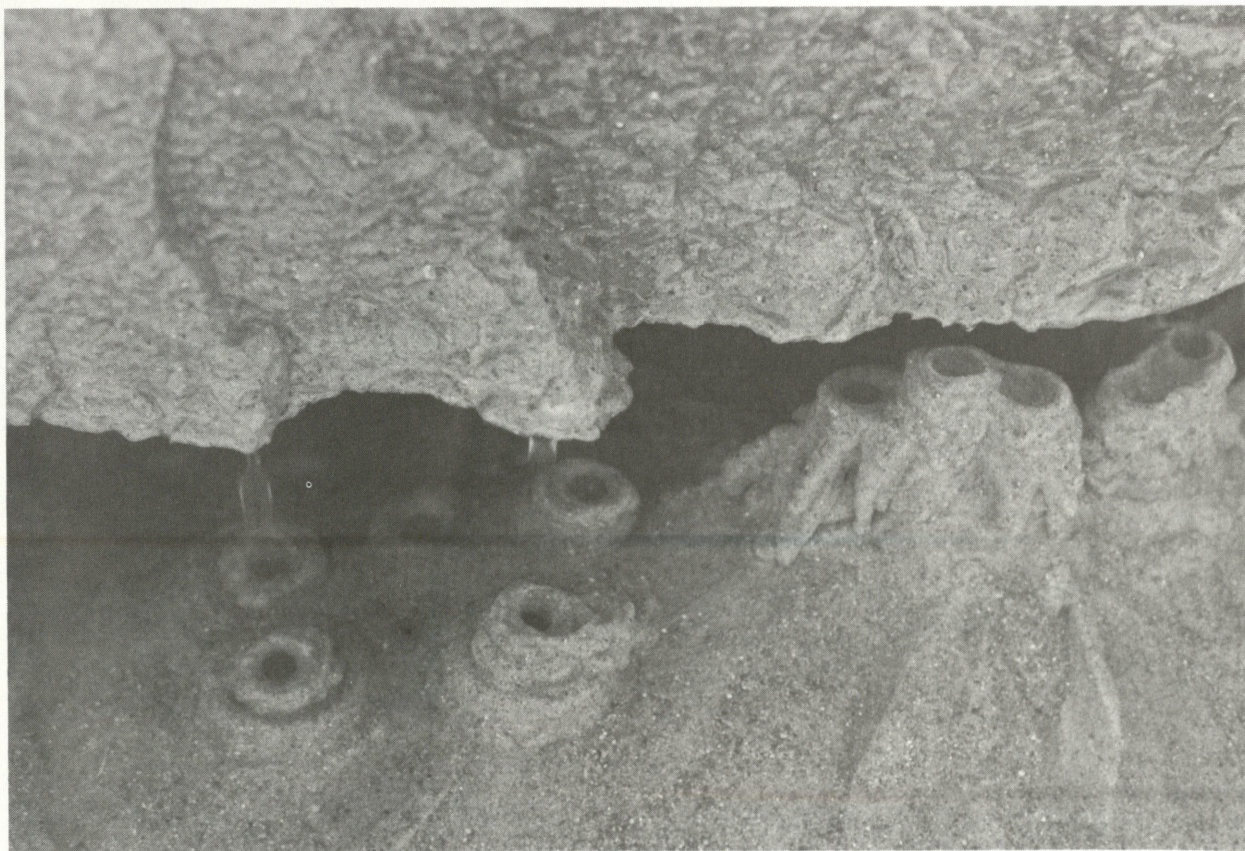
The fingers tangle  
into the ground like knotted roots  
of a tree with too many rings  
to count. His fingernails wear thin,  
black crescents, as if someone has outlined them.  
He still kneads the black soil  
with an urgent tenderness.

Ten years ago, his face  
crunched like a tin can when he squinted  
in the sun. He frightened me  
with a warning about rhododendron: poisonous  
juice that tastes sweet. His voice  
banged like a pot fallen on the floor  
when he told me how he hated  
the factory: after eight hours, his hands felt small  
razor slits, the skin stained with sulfur.

Since his wife's death, he cares for the flowers  
alone: begonias, chrysanthemums, roses...  
*The garden keeps its own time*, he says.  
In years I have not seen  
his expression so gentle. He holds  
a blossom in his hand like a small,  
fragile animal.

Rene Steinke





Barb Gade



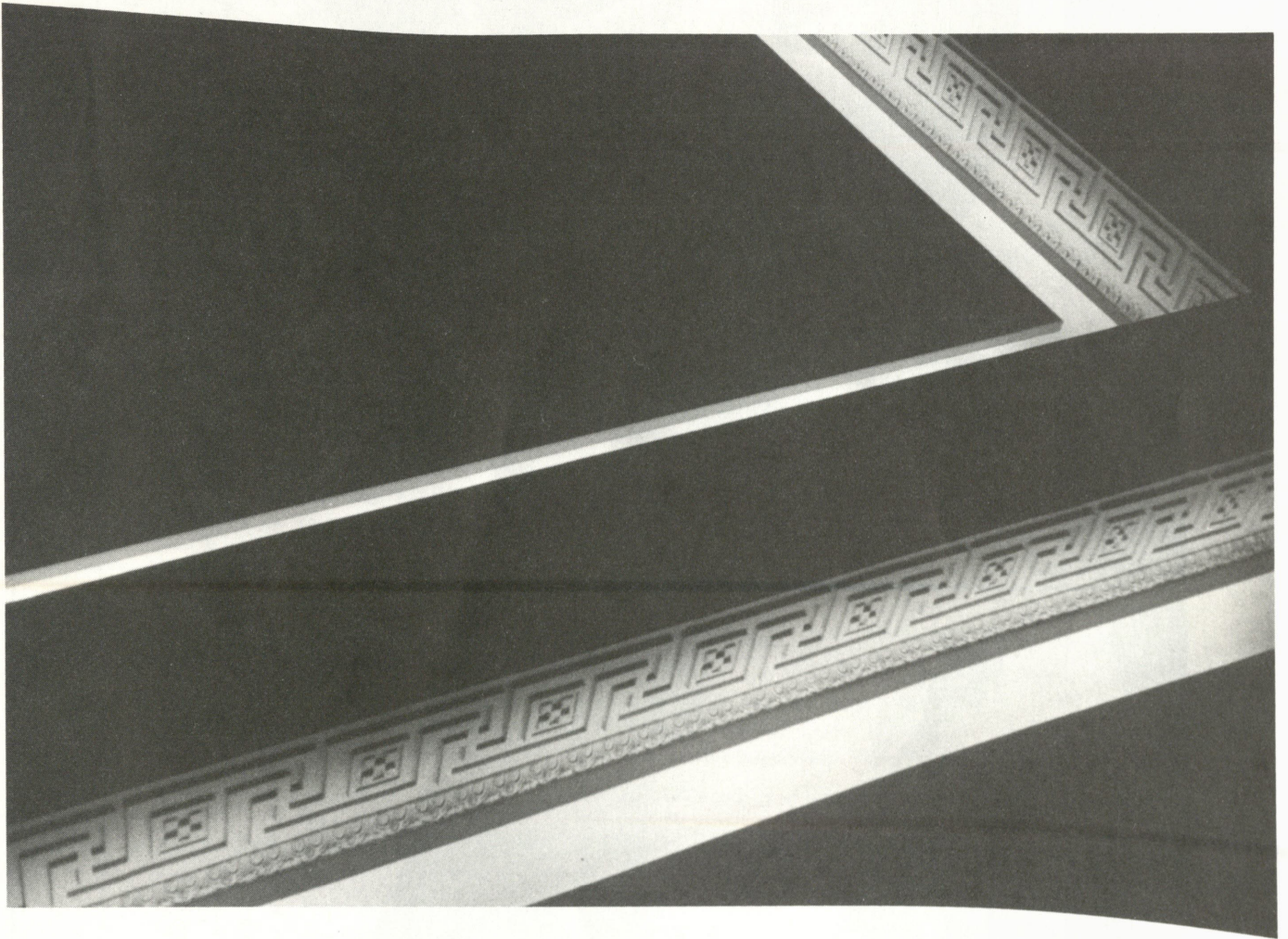
## Yeah, I Remember

the first time. Drinking  
a pitcher of vodka and mountain dew waiting  
for her lights and what I knew  
would be my first hand job. I'd been looking  
forward to it all week, getting hard  
in homeroom and shit,  
but it was quicker  
than I thought it'd be and not really much  
different than doing it myself.  
She left right after—had to go  
to a friend's. I just laid  
there in the second floor bedroom  
with cum on my shirt.

Tommy and Scooter came  
upstairs, too, after theirs left.  
Tommy's got so wasted she took off  
all her clothes and even asked  
him to, but he didn't.  
They just kinda fell asleep  
together for a while.  
Scooter's stripped, too, and so  
did he. He even slipped  
it in, but only for a few seconds  
and then he was scared  
shitless thinking  
'bout a baby and her  
for a wife. I started laughing  
and he hit me  
and told me to fuck off.  
it wasn't funny.

“Keith”





“Crisp”

Linda M. Starr





Krista Lewis



## Reference Point 6/2/85; The Folk Festival

Lying in a field of people  
with a friend and her roommate  
on a blanket with bagels and cheese,  
grapes and a bottle of carbonated water,  
urban monoliths rising about a thin shield  
of green, immature trees,  
brooding over the modern glass faces  
of the back of the Art Institute:  
no lions here,  
but instead smooth marble sculptures spouting water.

And on the stage of the band shell,  
the miniature performers—  
it is not a concert of sight,  
but rather, the singing of a temporary stonehenge;  
a socially aware oracle  
of black plastic-wrapped amplifiers  
atop the spider legs of scaffolding,  
their voices always a few seconds behind  
the amplifiers on the either side of the band shell,  
a curious delay,  
an echo of the present  
reaching our ears twice  
to register behind the tones of conversation—

an impermanent monument,  
not like the skyscrapers around us,  
or its counterpart on the Wiltshire plains—  
a ceremony of stones with no one left  
to fathom its mysteries,  
to interpret its purposes,  
*our* interpreters sing at us *through* our monuments;  
the people will last much longer than  
the black plastic Stonehenge we lie in—  
it will be dismantled this evening after the concert.

It's a matter of opposites:  
our slight mythologies reside in our heads.  
Those who remember the height of folk music a decade ago  
have gathered to perpetuate ceremony;  
they bring their wine and children  
and in a few millenia,  
when another capstone has shifted in England,  
archaeologists will turn to the monoliths  
that we have erected,  
not noticing the empty bottles and handful of black plastic  
we have left as a guide post  
to the things that have meant so much to us.

Eric Appleton



## In Case You've Wondered...

I save the rock because  
I know that one day you'll come  
Back to me  
And I'll ask, "Remember when  
You gave me this rock?"  
I know one day  
I'll show you this rock that I save  
That you don't know I have  
Nor probably can remember giving to me  
Because you gave not intending  
For me to hold on  
(but how was I to know)

I save the rock because  
It is all that is left  
And even it is cold  
And hard  
And lifeless  
But I save it still  
And you undoubtedly wouldn't recognize it  
If it hit you in the face  
Since you gave it to me  
So playfully  
And obviously thought I gave you my  
Love in the same manner

Venice Williams

## The Hunt

A silent shape slips through the wood, hesitates,  
looks back,  
then leaps away like a dead leaf driven before the storm's fury.  
Another follows,  
slower and less graceful  
as it wades through underbrush and drifts.  
The first dodges,  
doubles back,  
then bolts onto the frozen river, kicking up a shower of snow.  
Out of the woods a shadow slides,  
looms like a blotch of black oil  
spreading.  
A tiny movement, and time stops  
as a shot shatters the icicles on the air's frigid breath.  
Particles of frozen moisture explode in a cloud of rainbows  
as blood flames on the sleek ice:  
a red scratch on a silver ribbon.

Jennifer Barricklow

## Ode to a Pig named Jeff

### PUNCHLINE

hits you hard  
like the smack you got in third grade  
her long beautiful fingers  
etched a pink turkey  
on your thigh  
Remember?  
she screamed

### THANK HEAVEN

for  
stupidstupidstupid  
little angels  
Like you, your father  
is just another of  
God's dirty jokes

### POLACKS AND PRE-VERTS

and isn't it hysterical?  
the gap-toothed woman howls  
over the tiresome commotion  
of boys, beer, bras and boobs  
I Know Why You Came Here  
he says and buys you a drink  
but her old hands and twisted face bring out  
the sting  
the jerking  
the handfuls of hair  
and suddenly you're eight ducking  
just out of reach

### HEAVING

memories at him a man  
with compassion who leaves with something  
from Wild Kingdom, you wonder  
Is he going to take her home?  
rub her face  
in the cracks  
of cool callousness  
to his buddies  
like sometimes they throw you a bone

### DON'T YOU GET IT

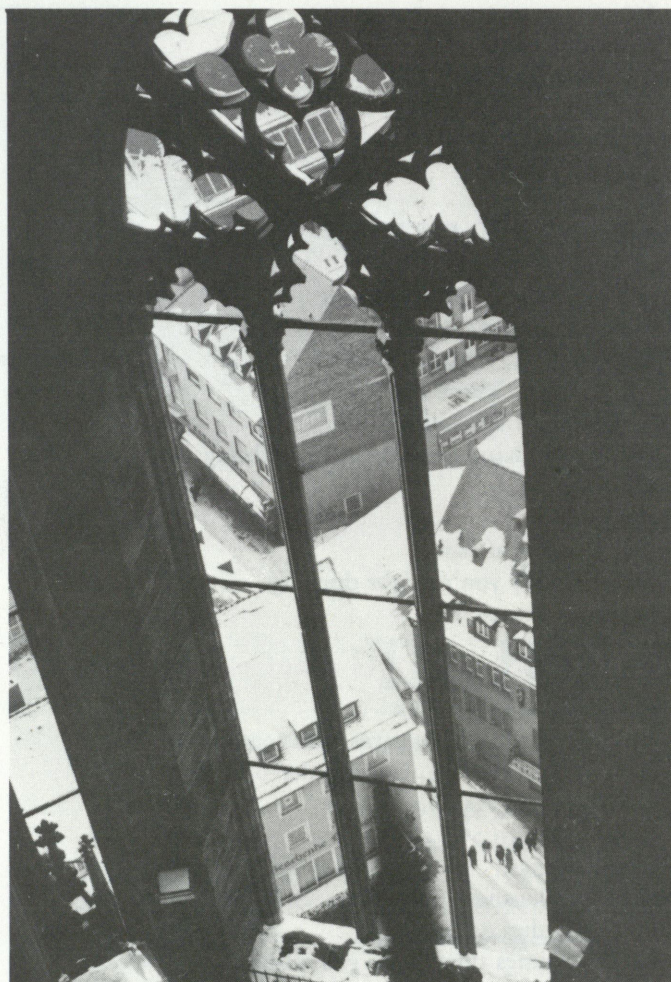
into your head  
to be high-falutin  
this is

### LIFE

there's no special treatment for angels  
and no time to waste  
when you're meeting a  
deadline

Sue McNaughton





Chanelle McMillan

## Traveler's Words

The whites of eyes rise from the dark  
men's faces when they stare  
at this table. My sangria tastes like licorice,  
black and sweet. Each night  
the locals speak the few phrases  
they know to women they've never seen  
before. Always hopeful, "Why you not smile?"

We meet at the Oasis Bar in Sagres,  
listening for voices we understand.  
You sell books for beers,  
one diversion for another.  
We play gin rummy and hearts,  
your words escaping through a blue haze  
of cigarette smoke.

In Barcelona, you managed with lyrics  
by the Beatles and sign language.  
"Everyone understands a little," you say.  
Using English with the Portuguese,  
you spit out one syllable at a time,  
like something hard and round.  
By summer solstice, you will be at Stonehenge  
to watch the sun return and rest.

I imagine that a child trimmed Portugal  
like pink putty, leaving a ragged lace  
for coast, a rocky lion and whale  
in the water—reasons to name  
the beaches.

By midnight, words foggy, you describe  
the nightmare of returning  
to a job in Canada.  
Three hundred feet below us,  
the water speaks its own raspy language.

Rene Steinke



## Notes on Contributors

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Samantha Arnold, Junior History major, Omaha, NE  
Jennifer Barricklow, Junior English major, Indianapolis, IN  
Laura Blair, Senior English major, Elmhurst, IL  
Sue Buss, Senior Social Work major, Wisconsin Rapids, WI  
Sara Dorow, Senior East-Asian Studies major, Seoul, Korea  
Kathrin Eimer, Sophomore Psychology major, Springfield, OH  
Rikard Eischen, Junior Theology major, Skokie, IL  
Paul Fackler, Junior English major, St. Louis, MO  
Barb Gade, Senior Graphic Communications major, Oshkosh, WI  
Debra Griswold, Junior Computer Science major, Lincoln, NE  
Christine Grusak, Junior English major, Portage, IN  
William Lemmons, Junior Art major, Valparaiso, IN  
Krista Lewis, Junior Art major, Fort Wayne, IN  
Mary Maronde, Senior American Studies major, Columbia Heights, MN  
Brian McGovern, Senior Journalism major, Co Club of Miami, FL  
Chanelle McMillan, Senior Latin major, Elmhurst, IL  
Sue McNaughton, Senior Journalism major, Niagara Falls, NY  
Kathleen Mullen, 9th year English Department Faculty Member, New Orleans, LA  
Terri Muth, 3rd year Law Student, St. Joseph, MI  
Lois Reiner, 1952 graduate of Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN  
Amy Richter, Junior Classics major, Racine, WI  
Bill Rohde, Sophomore English major, Appleton, WI  
Linda Starr, Senior Communications major, Navoo, IL  
Rene Steinke, Senior English major, Dallas, TX  
Matthew Voortman, Freshman Exploratory major, LaGrange, IL  
Venice Williams, Sophomore Theology major, Pittsburgh, PA

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# WORDFEST LITERARY PRIZES

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## \$50 EACH

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Wordfest and the English Department are pleased to announce guidelines for the 1985-86 Wordfest literary prizes in poetry, fiction, and non-fiction prose.

1. Entries should be of substantial length:
  - A. A single poem of at least fourteen lines or a group of poems.
  - B. A short-story of at least 1000 words.
  - C. Non-fiction prose of at least 1000 words.
2. Entries should be typed, double-spaced, with author's name on each page. Author's name, address and phone number should appear on title page.
3. Entries should be sent to Prof. Edward Byrne, English Department.
4. Winners will be announced at the Spring open reading sponsored by Wordfest. All contestants will be invited to participate in the open reading.
5. A 50\$ prize will be awarded in each category. However, should the judges decide no entry outstanding in a particular genre, no prize will be given in that category.
6. No limit to number of entries from each contestant. Further information may be obtained from Prof. Byrne at 5278.



